



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Issue 116 – July 10, 2006

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Greetings from the 2006 Governor's Conference on Tourism!

Today is our first day of the conference, and we're kicking the day off with the Rod Siler Memorial Golf Tournament here at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort. We'll end our first conference day by recognizing stars of the industry during the Arizona Hotel and Lodging Association and the Arizona Restaurant and Hospitality Association annual STARs (Special Tribute and Recognition) gala. Tomorrow, I'm looking forward to presenting Arizona's year-end tourism data along with AOT achievements and industry updates during my "State of the Industry" speech at 8 a.m., and one of the best parts of the conference is getting to award the Governor's Tourism Awards with Governor Janet Napolitano during the luncheon tomorrow at 11:45. I know this year's conference will help us all *step up our game*, and I am looking forward to seeing many of you in Tucson later today!

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Autumn is Amazing in Arizona

For those who like to plan ahead -- autumn is just around the corner. The Arizona Office of Tourism would like to remind visitors of all the activities and attractions the Grand Canyon State offers to those who travel during the fall season. From trees painted by the brush of fall colors to the adrenaline rush of watching professional sports to the peaceful and quiet getaways and spirited and haunting escapes, there are plenty of destinations and activities to fall for. AOT's Web site, ArizonaVacationValues.com, is a great place to post tourism-related autumn specials, discounts and packages that are valid from September 1 to December 1. Offers may include deals, special rates, accommodations, package or tours. To participate, go to www.ArizonaVacationValues.com and select special promotion "Autumn is Awesome in Arizona" when you submit your offer. If you need additional assistance, please contact Marjorie Magnusson at (602) 364-3695 or mmagnusson@azot.gov.

Rural Tourism Development Grant Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2007

The Rural Tourism Development Grant Program (RTDGP) guidelines for fiscal year 2007 are now available. The primary objective of the competitive grant program is to provide coordinated funding for tourism related infrastructure projects. The funding amount for FY 07 is \$697,000. AOT has added \$197,000 of unallocated TEAM grant funds. These funds assist rural economic development through tourism to strengthen the regional and local economies and expand tourism in rural and Tribal communities throughout Arizona. The primary function of the infrastructure project must be tourism development and the project must be designed to initiate economic growth and enhance future tourism development. Applications are available on AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov under the Grants section.

Trippin' with AOT

Register Now for Japanese Receptive Operator Sales Mission

The Annual Japanese Receptive Operator Sales Mission is scheduled to take place in Los Angeles, CA on August 3, 2006. This mission is an organized function that introduces Arizona suppliers and DMOs to the California-based travel professionals of major Japanese tour companies. The event features destination development seminars/workshops as well as a marketplace. Participation fee is \$250 for suppliers and \$350 for DMOs, plus travel expenses. Contact Osamu Hoshino for more information at ohoshino@comcast.net or 801-266-3345. Deadline for participation is July 17, 2006.

Wildfire Update

For the most current wildfire information for the state of Arizona, visit www.az211.gov.

Most of the Coconino National Forest Red Rock Ranger District re-opened at 8:00 am on

Friday, July 7, 2006. The majority of Sedona's trails will be open and Grasshopper Day Use Area and Slide Rock State Park will be open.

Fire conditions within Grand Canyon National Park have moderated with increased precipitation and the onset of monsoons. In the last few weeks, fire danger has gone from extreme down to high. The improved conditions allowed fire managers at Grand Canyon National Park to lift fire restrictions on the South and North Rims of Grand Canyon effective July 5, 2006.

Industry News

Las Vegas Could Get China Air Service

Efforts to promote Nevada's tourism industry are paying off in Asia and could soon result in direct air service from China, a state tourism leader said Wednesday. Bruce Bommarito, director of the Nevada Commission on Tourism, said a recent trade mission to Asia laid the groundwork for a forthcoming friendship agreement with the government of Guangzhou, a southeastern China metropolis with more than 10 million residents. That agreement would be largely ceremonial, but Bommarito said its larger purpose involves the launch of direct air service between that city and Nevada. (www.LasVegasReview-Journal.com/Business)

JetBlue Launching Tucson-JFK Nonstop

This fall, JetBlue Airways Corp. will launch service connecting Tucson to New York's JFK Airport. The daily, nonstop service will begin Sept. 28. JetBlue is offering an introductory fare of \$129 each way for travel between Sept. 28 and Oct. 31, but tickets must be purchased by July 18. Regular fares between Tucson and New York's JFK will range between \$179 and \$399 each way. JetBlue said Tucson service will complement the twice-daily nonstops from Phoenix to New York's JFK. JetBlue will use a 156-seat, A320 aircraft for the Tucson-New York flight. The plane offers all-leather seats and 36 channels of DirectTV programming. New York-based JetBlue serves 38 destinations with more than 410 flights daily. For more: www.jetblue.com. (Phoenix Business Journal, www.bizjournals.com/phoenix)

45 Percent Increase In New U.S. Hotel Construction Forecast For 2006

PricewaterhouseCoopers forecasts that construction will begin on 119,000 new hotel rooms in 2006, an increase of 45 percent over 2005. The largest percentage increase will be in upscale hotels and mid-price hotels without food and beverage. This compares with the 10 and 25 year average new hotel room construction starts of 108,652 and 82,625, respectively. This is the highest level of new hotel room construction since 2000. According to F.W. Dodge, last year's new hotel room construction was 82,625, only 3.2 percent over the 80,038 room starts in 2004, representing a 4.4 percent increase over

2003. The slowing growth in construction starts in 2004 and 2005 reflected a number of factors, including a higher ratio of full service hotels being built (full service hotels require longer planning before construction begins), increased costs for construction materials and cancellation or delays for projects in the Southeast and Gulf regions because of hurricane damage. The increase in 2006 is supported by the largest three-year U.S. lodging industry revenue per available room (RevPAR) increase since 1981.(Marketing and Tourism Trends, 6/30)

Study: Strong Canadian Employment To Boost Travel

About half of Canadians are planning to travel during their vacation this summer and, on average, they expect to spend about \$2,500 on the trip, according to a new study conducted for Scotiabank. According to bank economist Adrienne Warren, reports Canadian Press, the strong job situation has bolstered household income and help support travel spending. Scotiabank said the survey respondents said they planned to spend, on average, about \$810 on transportation and \$453 on meals and beverages – up \$74 and \$41, respectively, from last year's results. However, this study found this year's respondents planned to pay significantly more on entertainment and sight-seeing and less on accommodation than in 2005. Accommodation spending fell by \$185 to \$529 while entertainment and sightseeing rose by \$112 to \$460, the study estimates. (Marketing and Tourism Trends, 6/30)

Orbitz Launches City Podcasts

Orbitz has launched Insider Podcasts, available for download via iTunes and Orbitz.com. The podcast travel guides provide customers expert insight on the best things to see, do, and experience in some of America's top destination cities. The first Orbitz Insider Podcasts will feature New York City, Los Angeles and San Francisco, including neighborhood-specific podcasts that help travelers find the hot events and activities in the area nearest them. Updated podcast postings will be available on the OrbitzTLC page on a monthly basis for all participating cities. After testing these markets, additional Orbitz Insider Podcasts will likely be rolled out featuring major cities in the United States and Europe. (Source: Internet Travel News)

Expedia to Feature BedandBreakfast.com Inventory

Expedia will begin featuring BedandBreakfast.com's inventory across the Expedia and Hotels.com web sites. This relationship will make BedandBreakfast.com the exclusive B&B aggregator for Expedia, Inc. and Expedia will be the B&B provider's exclusive online travel agent. According to an official statement, Expedia and BedandBreakfast.com will be seamlessly linked for rates, availability and bookings. "Now, small properties will be able to easily sell through the Expedia Web sites and gain access to a large audience of consumers without adding a lot of work at the property level. Properties will be able to manage content, rates and availability for all of Expedia's Web sites in one place on BedandBreakfast.com." (Source: Expedia)

Travel Websites Becoming Virtual Travel Agents

Among UK consumers, more than half of all holidays and flights are expected to be booked online next year, overtaking "high street" bookings for the first time, according to Thomson Holidays. Travel Web sites are replacing travel agents as the most popular way to book a holiday, the company said, citing new online trends such as blogging, podcasting and video streaming coupled with the rise in broadband as behind the trend. Thomson confirmed that its online bookings are three years ahead of its predictions with half its own holidays and flights are currently booked online, up from 38 percent in 2005. According to Miles Morgan, Thompson Sales and Marketing Director, the trend for community sites is also affecting how people buy holidays. "People trust the opinions of other people so we have made it possible for customers to review holidays and post their opinions and pictures they have taken on our Web site - we currently have more than 5,000 reviews." (Source www.Eyefortravel.com)

Lastminute.com Makes Hotels Bookable by Mobile Phones

Lastminute.com is enabling consumers to book hotels via their mobile phones through a partnership with network provider 02. Hotels are just the first step and by the end of the year consumers will be able to research and buy a shopping basket of last minute products including flights and theatre tickets. Since 2000, Lastminute.com has had deals with the major mobile phone networks enabling consumers to browse its products and then book by phone. The mobile Internet service currently receives a million page impressions every month, according to Lastminute.com. The company plans to expand the new transactional service to the other networks later on this year. (www.TravelMole.com)

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